Safety Leadership and HOF: Where do we go from here?

Kathryn Mearns

Principal Human Factors Specialist

Wood Special Technical Services

Background

- Offshore oil and gas industry
- Conventional power generation
- Air Traffic Control
- Maritime Industry
- Healthcare sector
- Nuclear Industry

- Researcher, Regulator, Practitioner

Areas of research

- Risk Perception
- Safety culture/safety climate
- Health climate
- HOF in Incident investigation
- Safety leadership
- Safety intelligence

- Main interest has been the organisational factors that influence human performance

Findings

- Different industries, same issues:
  - Perceived lack of management commitment to safety;
  - Inadequate communication;
  - Inadequate procedures;
  - Inability to ‘speak up’ about safety;
  - Inability to implement lessons learned.

Analysis of Major Accidents

- Decision-making (safety not a priority)
  - Challenger; Ladbroke Grove;
- Focus on the wrong type of indicators
  - Texas City; Deepwater Horizon;
- Inadequate regulation
  - Deepwater Horizon; Fukushima Daiichi;
- Lack of Leadership for Safety
  - Probably all of them!

Incident Investigation

- Incidents usually arise from the actions of front-line staff (errors/non-compliances);
- Proper root cause analysis usually identifies ‘latent conditions’ that have been residing within the organisation;
- ‘Setting up’ front-line staff to fail;
- Lack of management commitment to safety through decision-making processes, resource allocation, inconsistent messages and actions.

We know what the problems are

- Large body of research corroborates what we know about organisational issues and safety;
- Regulators and industry bodies publish plenty of guidance to support industry;
  - UK Health and Safety Executive; International Atomic Energy Agency; EUROCONTROL; Energy Institute; Oil and Gas Producers; OECD;
- What are the barriers to implementing our research knowledge and guidance?
  - What are the barriers to ‘learning lessons’ in the widest sense?

How can the Regulator contribute to safety?

- Do we need more scrutiny and more powers to enforce rather than just looking at ‘expectations’?
- Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) Safety Assessment Principles:
- MS1 to MS4;
  - Leadership
  - Capable Organisation
  - Decision Making
  - Learning

Mindful leadership

- Same as Safety Culture Assessments?
  - Seeking the views of frontline staff to gain a more realistic picture of operations;
  - Encouraging ‘bottom-up’ communications;
  - Providing the necessary resources for safety;
  - Using accidents that occur in other organisations and industries as opportunities to learn;
  - Proactively commissioning audits to diagnose weaknesses in the organisation’s defences and be willing to **accept and act** on ‘bad news’.

Discussion

- What is the correct mix between guidance and enforcement?
- What level of detail does the regulator set for ‘Organisational’ requirements?
- What does the regulator regulate – the process or the outcome?
- What other ways are there to make progress?
  - Benchmarking within and between sectors?